

Education Committee

SUPPORT: Executive Budget Charter Per Pupil Increase & SB 948, SB 949, and SB 886.

Monday, March 3, 2021

Dear Lawmakers,

Thank you to the members of the Appropriations Committee for the opportunity to speak with you today on an issue very important to me.

My name is Gregory Perry. My family and I have been connected to the Integrated Day Charter School for over 20 years, from the very beginning. My sister, Janine, was one of the first teachers at the school. My Mother, Jayne, was a teaching assistant for many years. As an undergraduate student at Eastern CT State University, I volunteered at IDCS whenever I could because I was fascinated by what a cool school it was. I have been a teacher at IDCS for almost 8 years now and I have two children (Lucian in 5th grade and Odessa in 1st grade) currently enrolled at IDCS. I care about this school and its students and its future.

There are many things that I could tell you about why this school is so special. Unfortunately, three minutes is not enough to explain all of the ways that this school is amazing. I encourage you to come and visit and see for yourself when you are able. I will focus on two things unique to IDCS that I think are relevant to the topic at hand. Social Justice and Critical Pedagogy are two big parts of this school's guiding philosophy. We teach our students to look at issues, both historical and present day, from multiple perspectives, with a critical lens. We also care deeply about fairness and justice. I will admit, with my connection to the school, I am aware of my bias. Of course I want greater funding for the school I love and that I teach at, it directly benefits me. Analyzing the situation when it comes to school funding in CT with a critical lens however, I can say that the current funding levels are objectively unjust.

The Integrated Day Charter School may be a charter school, but it is not a for profit school. It is not a private school. The students who come to our school are public school students. With the exception of children of teachers, and peers of current students, no one can use their privilege to have their child accepted into our school, or be denied entry because of any lack of privilege. We are following the same educational mandates, and working with the same students as any other local public school. Despite having equal needs and responsibilities to our public school system peers, we are funded at a much lower level. I have never

We are a CT Education Association school as well. We try to maintain competitive pay and benefits when compared to the other schools in our county. Having just been involved in contract negotiations this year, I can tell you, this is not easy because our funding is flat and low, and it has been for some time. We don't want to take advantage of our underfunded school that we love, but we don't want to be paid significantly lower than our peers. We have lost experienced and awesome teachers who moved to other districts and immediately made more money, to work less hours and less days.

The bottom line here is that what is happening is wrong. 11,250 flat funding per pupil is unjust. Period. The legal minimum for CT public schools is 11,525. The Governor's proposal to bring us up to the minimum is a nice first step, but it is not a reason to rejoice in my opinion. Hard

working school staff and public school students being short changed for years, and now being brought up to the bare minimum is not justice or equity, it's the bare minimum. I teach my own children and my students that doing the bare minimum is never enough. Sorry that I personally don't have the numbers or data, but I am aware that most school districts are funded at much higher rates than that 11,525 minimum. There is no evidence that we have a lower need or lower costs than other schools. The fact that we have allowed the funding to be so grossly disproportionate, is unconscionable. These are our schools, our teachers, and our students. The appropriate thing to do, the just thing to do, the pragmatic thing to do, and the right thing to do is to substantially raise charter school funding to a fair and equitable level.

Thank you for your time,

Gregory Perry

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